

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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NSC-05 DODE-00 CIAE-00 USIA-01 EUR-08 /045 W
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P R 170330Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5267
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 8061

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, AF
SUBJECT: CABINET CRISIS RESOLVED AS SIX MINISTERS RETURN TO
THEIR DESKS

REF: KABUL 7967

1. SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO A NUMBER OF RELIABLE SOURCES, THE CABINET CRISIS WHICH HAS SHAKEN THE AFGHAN BODY POLITIC FOR THE PAST WEEK (REFTEL) HAS BEEN RESOLVED, APPARENTLY TO THE SATISFACTION OF PRESIDENT DAOUD AND THE SIX DISSIDENT MINISTERS, ALL OF WHOM ARE REPORTEDLY BACK AT THEIR DESKS. ALTHOUGH THIS PARTICULAR EPISODE MAY NOW BE OVER, THE QUESTION IT HAS RAISED, THE PERSONAL POLITICAL AMBITIONS IT HAS SURFACED, AND THE RIFTS IT MIGHT HAVE CAUSED, AS WELL AS UNCOVERED, PROBABLY WILL HAVE FAR-REACHING IMPACT ON AFGHAN POLITICS. IN OUR VIEW, WHAT THESE EVENTS FUNDAMENTALLY REPRESENT IS NOT ONLY A DISPUTE OVER WHO WAS OR WAS NOT ON THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF THE PARTY OF THE
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NATIONAL REVOLUTION (PNR) -- ALTHOUGH THIS ISSUE PROBABLY IGNITED THE EXPLOSION -- BUT ALSO THE OPENING ENGAGEMENT IN THE SUCCESSION STRUGGLE WHICH COULD BURST UPON US ANYTIME, GIVEN DAOUD'S 68 YEARS OF AGE. IT IS STILL PREMATURE TO IDENTIFY WITH CERTAINTY ANY LONG-TERM WINNERS OR LOSERS EMERGING FROM THIS RECENT EPISODE, BUT THE CHALLENGES WHICH WERE MADE PROBABLY CAUSED RENTS IN THE POLITICAL FABRIC WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT BE REPAIRABLE. END SUMMARY.

2. WE HAVE LEARNED FROM A NUMBER OF RELIABLE SOURCES THAT THE SIX MINISTERS CITED IN OUR REFTEL DID, IN FACT, SUBMIT THEIR RESIGNATIONS TO PRESIDENT MOHAMMAD DAOU, AND THAT THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN JOINED BY EDUCATION MINISTER IBRAHIM MAJID SERAJ, HAD HE BEEN IN THE COUNTRY (HE IS CURRENTLY IN THE U.S. RE-CUPERATING FROM SERIOUS SURGERY). FOREIGN MINISTER WAHEED ABDULLAH REPORTEDLY WAS THE "CATALYST" WHO BROUGHT TOGETHER THIS SOMEWHAT DISPARATE GROUP OF MEN -- WHOSE DISPLAY OF POLITICAL COURAGE AND INDEPENDENCE, QUALITIES WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN SEEN IN GREAT ABUNDANCE IN KABUL SINCE THE 1973 COUP, APPARENTLY SUCCEEDED IN WRINGING OUT SOME SORT OF AGREEMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT, SATISFACTORY AT LEAST TO THESE SIX DISSIDENTS.

3. ACCORDING TO THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE ACCOUNTS WE HAVE HEARD, THE SPECIFIC ISSUE OVER WHICH THE MINISTERS WENT TO THE MAT WITH DAOUD HAD TO DO WITH ARTICLE 94 OF THE CONSTITUTION AND ARTICLE 60 OF THE PNR CHARTER. THESE TWO ARTICLES STATE THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT(S) AND MINISTERS ARE RESPONSIBLE TO THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF THE PARTY FOR THEIR ACTIONS. THUS, WAHEED ABDULLAH, ET AL, SAW THEMSELVES AS SECOND-CLASS MINISTERS TO THE FOUR MINISTERS NAMED TO THE CENTRAL COUNCIL, AND REPORTEDLY PROTESTED THAT THE APPOINTMENT OF FOUR INCUMBENT MINISTERS TO THE CENTRAL COUNCIL WAS "ILLEGAL," BECAUSE IT, IN EFFECT, MADE THESE MEN ANSWERABLE ONLY TO THEMSELVES (IN ADDITION TO THE PRESIDENT, OF COURSE).

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4. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THIS LEGAL ARGUMENT WAS MERELY A SMOKESCREEN TO COVER THE REAL ISSUE WHICH PROMPTED THIS IMBROGLIO. THAT WAS THAT THE ABDULLAH-LED GROUP OF SIC MINISTERS HAD CONCLUDED THAT THE COMPOSITION OF APPOINTEES TO THE HIGH COUNCIL OF THE ARMED FORCES, AND TO THE PARTY'S CENTRAL COUNCIL, MEANT THAT THE POLITICAL TIDE WAS NOT RUNNING IN THEIR FAVOR, AND THAT THEY HAD TO TAKE SOME OVERT STEP TO BRING THEIR VIEWS TO DAOUD'S ATTENTION, AND TO CURB THE SEEMING POLITICAL ASCENDENCY OF DEFENSE MINISTER GHULAM HAIDER RASULI AND, PARTICULARLY, FINANCE MINISTER SYED ABDULILAH.

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ACTION NEA-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KABUL 8061

5. THE ELEMENTS OF THE SOLUTION WORKED OUT BETWEEN THE MINISTERS AND DAOUD ARE NOT YET KNOWN, OR EVEN RUMORED. WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT THE SIX, AS WELL AS DAOUD, ARE APPARENTLY SATISFIED WITH THE AGREEMENT AND HAVE STRUCK A "BUSINESS AS USUAL" POSTURE BACK IN THEIR RESPECTIVE MINISTRIES. WHAT IS LESS CLEAR IS THE POSSIBLE REACTION THESE EVENTS MIGHT PROVOKE ON THE PART OF THOSE MINISTERS AND ADVISORS TO DAOUD WHO WERE THE PRESUMED TARGETS OF THIS CONFRONTATION -- ABDULILAH IN PARTICULAR. SIGNS OF RETALIATION WILL BE CAREFULLY SOUGHT BY ALL OBSERVERS, BUT WE WOULD NOW ANTICIPATE THERE OCCURRING A PERIOD OF QUIET. PERHAPS THE APPOINTMENT OF A VICE PRESIDENT(S) SOMETIME IN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS OR SO WILL PROVIDE A CLUE ABOUT THE MATTER. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE PNR CENTRAL COUNCIL WILL BE ENLIVENED TO EMBRACE THE FACTION REPRESENTED BY ABDULLAH ET AL.

6. IN THE LARGER SENSE, WE CONCLUDE THAT THIS PARTICULAR EPISODE, PERHAPS IRRESPECTIVE OF THE SOLUTION WHICH WAS WORKED OUT, REPRESENTS THE OPENING ENGAGEMENT OF THE SUCCESSION STRUGGLE WHICH WILL SOONER OR LATER BE WAGED FOR THE AFGHAN LEADERSHIP. THE FACT THAT THESE SIX MINISTERS DECIDED AT THIS TIME TO CON-

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FRONT DAOUD, COULD WELL REFLECT THEIR BELIEF THAT "THE FUTURE IS NOW" IN TERMS OF THEIR OWN POLITICAL FORTUNES, AND PERHAPS, IN THEIR EYES, THOSE OF AFGHANISTAN. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE NOTE THAT WAHEED ABDULLAH APPEARS TO HAVE ENTERED THE LISTS TO REPLACE DAOUD -- JUDGING FROM HIS APPARENTLY STRONG AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP OF THE DISSIDENT GROUP. WHETHER THEIR DECISION TO ACT WAS PREMATURE IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW, BUT THE ALL-IMPORTANT FACT IS THAT THEY CHOSE TO TAKE THEIR STAND NOW, AND, THEREBY, PROBABLY STARTED AN IRREVERSIBLE PROCESS WHOSE UNFOLDING COULD CONCEIVABLY TAKE YEARS, BUT WHOSE DIRECTION COULD BE CRUCIAL FOR THIS COUNTRY.

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